

Review of the Opera Season

'LE DONNE CURIOSE' and 'MONA'
THE MOST INTERESTING
NOVELTIES BROUGHT OUT
BY MR. GATTI-CASAZZA.

The season of opera at the Metropolitan Opera House began on November 18 and continued twenty-two weeks. In that time thirty-four operas were performed. Of these four were novelties, to wit, "Lobetanz," "Le Donne Curiose," "Versiegelt" and "Mona." The most difficult production of the four was that of "Le Donne Curiose," because the work presented more problems in stage management and musical accuracy than the others. That the production was so admirable was one of the chief causes for rejoicing in the course of a season not prolific in moments of high exaltation.

No one of the novelties brought to the notice of the public is likely to be accepted as a work of the highest importance. By far the best of them was "Le Donne Curiose," an opera buffa of genuine charm and exquisitely skilful musical treatment. It is unnecessary now to review its salient excellences. These were quite sufficiently discussed in the course of the season. It is enough to say now that an opera which combines so much buoyancy of spirit, so much elan in execution, so much native character and such intimate acquaintance with the best traditions of the Italian lyric stage ought to retain its place in the repertory of the theatre.

The production of Prof. Parker's "Mona" also was an achievement of which Mr. Gatti-Casazza and his associates may well be proud. There were many formidable difficulties to be overcome in the preparation of the opera for the public and they were overcome with patience and judgment.

With the artistic questions raised by the disclosures of this American opera we need not concern ourselves just now. When the opera is restored to the glare of the footlights next season it will furnish food for renewed discussion. Its distinguished composer, proving himself to be like all other musical persons, is astonished and dismayed by the fact that his creation was not hailed by critical opinion as the revelation of a new and convincing genre in art.

This species of astonishment is quite common. All makers and performers of music are subject to it. They have for centuries shown themselves incapable of thinking it possible that their deeds can be less than perfect. This is unfortunate, for it deprives them of the great joy of perceiving that the world, including the professional critics, has accorded them very high praise indeed.

Prof. Parker should have been astonished not to find that the commentators found his work not quite perfect but that they found it to be so excellent. It was little short of a triumph for an entirely inexperienced composer for the theatre to miss by so narrow a margin creating a very effective "drama musical."

Only an opera of uncommon inherent force could have received the praise which was bestowed upon "Mona." It was treated much more approvingly than the "Elektra" of Richard Strauss, and yet that famous musician has had far more experience in writing for the stage than Prof. Parker has. It was praised by most critics more than "Pelléas et Mélisande," "Salome" and "The Girl of the Golden West." And in spite of all this the distinguished composer publicly whimpers. The indisputable fact remains that "Le Donne Curiose" was the principal novelty of the Metropolitan season. A charming work and one that left a distinctly pleasing taste in the mouth. There are many old comedies quite as good as that of Goldoni. Let us hope that some other composer will follow the lead of Wolf-Ferrari. A good opera buffa is always a delight.

The one serious Italian opera made known to the Metropolitan stage was introduced by the Philadelphia-Chicago company and is therefore not a subject for consideration in a retrospect of the "regular" season. "The Jewels of the Madonna" will doubtless be heard here again, although it is said that the local organization, in that case, however, Mr. Dippel will without doubt offer us further opportunities to hear it when he brings his welcome visitors across New Jersey next winter.

Mr. Gatti-Casazza had the good fortune to introduce to this public one singer of impressive personality in Mme. Matzenauer. Her addition to the company was one of real importance. Her imposing impersonations of Orfeo, Waltraute and Kundry will long be cherished in the memories of opera-goers. It is a pleasure to know that she will continue to be a member of the company in the next season. Other new singers are promised, and it is hoped that some of them will meet the ideas of this public as successfully as Mme. Matzenauer has met them.

The statistics of the season present the usual array of interesting figures. The following table shows the date of the first performance of each opera and the number of representations it received in the course of the season:

The course of the season.		
Opera	Date.	Times.
Aida	Nov. 13	7
Amleto	" 15	7
King of the Golden West.	" 16	7
Trigian and Isoldo.	" 17	5
Lothario	" 18	5
Malama Butterfly.	" 20	7
Ida	" 22	3
Gottendammerung	" 23	7
La Follia Rusticana.	" 24	6
Pagliaro	" 24	6
Elisabeth	" 25	5
La Sonnambula	" 26	6
Parafal	" 29	5
Il Trovatore	" 30	5
La Boheme	Dec. 2	6
Hansel and Gretel	" 4	7
Archie	" 11	5
Archie	" 12	3
Ida	" 25	3
Ida	" 27	3
Ida	" 27	3
Ida	" 30	3
Ida	Jan. 3	3
Ida	Jan. 3	3
Ida	" 11	5
Ida	" 12	5
Ida	" 20	4
Ida	" 31	3
Ida	Feb. 1	1
Ida	" 8	5
Ida	" 17	5
Ida	" 25	4
Ida	" 25	2
Ida	Mar. 4	1
Ida	" 4	1
Ida	" 30	5
Ida	April 9	9